

DOS REVIEWED 25-Oct-2010: NO OBJECTION TO DECLASSIFICATION

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JCS REVIEWED 28-Sep-2010: DECLASSIFIED FOR RELEASE IN FULL

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger

SUBJECT: General Wheeler's Views on Phase IV Troop Withdrawals

You will recall that during your meeting with General Wheeler on March 11 you asked him to forward his views on whether or not he would prefer an announcement in two increments or in one increment for the Phase IV withdrawals from Vietnam (April 15 - August 15).

General Wheeler has furnished via the JCS Liaison officer a one-page, unsigned summary of his views (Tab A). He makes the following points:

-- Favors a single announcement covering the entire period since it would:

(a) provide greater flexibility as to the selection of units for withdrawal;

(b) permit retention of key units late into the period;

(c) allow more orderly completion of logistics tasks remaining from earlier deployments;

(d) facilitate sea transport for the redeployment of Marine Corps units; and

(e) lessen confusion by spreading withdrawal planning over more extended period.

-- Opposes further redeployments at this time unless there are compelling political and budgetary considerations.

-- Recommends holding in abeyance the Phase IV redeployment pending another assessment over the next 90 days.

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I am in full agreement with the single announcement alternative. Concerning the timing of the Phase IV withdrawal itself, General Wheeler's views are consistent with those of General Haig's following his assessment of the situation on the ground in Vietnam last month. For this reason, I am preparing a more detailed separate analysis for you which outlines some of the considerations and options which are available as we approach the next withdrawal announcement. I will forward this memorandum to you by Monday of next week. I am also forwarding by separate memorandum an analysis of the fund availability for the balance of FY 71 and the impact of these funds on the conduct of our operations in Vietnam.

Attachment

HAK:AMH:feg:3/17/70

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PHASE IV TROOP WITHDRAWALS

-Timing Alternatives-

1. Phase IV troop withdrawals could be initiated in one of several ways:

a. A relatively small reduction during the period 15 April-15 June, followed by another relatively small reduction during the period 15 June-15 August; or

b. A more sizeable reduction to be announced and accomplished during the period 15 April-15 August.

2. The one-bite approach, with the phase extending over a four-month period, is preferable to the two-bite method since it would:

a. Provide greater flexibility in the selection of options for the withdrawal of critical combat forces.

b. Permit retention of key units late into the period, and extend the time frame in which to accomplish required tactical readjustments.

c. Enable the more orderly completion of logistic tasks remaining on 15 April from earlier redeployments.

d. Facilitate the arrival of necessary fleet shipping for the movement of Marine Corps units.

e. Avoid confusion in the midst of a transition to a possible subsequent phase in the June time frame, (particularly complex administrative/logistics readjustments in I CTZ at that time).

3. Even though the one-bite approach is preferable to the two-bite method, the over-all situation is such that no further redeployment should be directed at this time unless there are compelling political or budgetary considerations.

4. On balance, it would be preferable from a military standpoint to hold in abeyance the Phase IV redeployment pending another assessment of developments over the next 90 days.

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March 17, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM: Al Haig /5/

SUBJECT: Timing Alternatives for Phase IV Troop Withdrawals

During his meeting with the President following the DPRC meeting on March 11, General Wheeler was instructed to submit his preference on two timing alternatives for the Phase IV troop withdrawals from Vietnam. Apparently the President asked his views on whether he would prefer two small reductions: one during the period April 15 - June 15 to be followed by another small reduction during June 15 - August 15, or a more sizeable reduction for the entire period April 15 - August 15.

General Wheeler recommends the "one-bite approach" in an unsigned, single page memorandum delivered today by Capt. Robinson (Tab A). I agree fully with his logic and bring to your attention paragraphs 3 and 4 of this same document in which the Chairman qualifies his recommendation by stating that the overall situation is such that no further redeployments should be directed at this time, and specifically that from a military standpoint the Phase IV redeployment should be held in abeyance pending another assessment of developments over the next 90 days. As you know, I am in agreement with the Chairman's views on this issue and believe that this is about to become a major problem for Secretary Laird and the President.

In addition to this unsigned piece of paper, I am informed that General Wheeler has just forwarded a memorandum to Secretary Laird with the specific request that it be transmitted to the President. This memorandum contains the views of General Abrams, who categorically challenges the current method of funding the war in Vietnam, raises the issue of precipitous troop withdrawals and insists that he must be permitted to retain the current levels of attack air and B-52 operations as well as delay on the 4th tranche. As I predicted upon my return from Vietnam, this was bound to happen and I believe the President is going to be faced with a major crisis within the next three weeks on this issue. It will be interesting to see whether Secretary Laird forwards the Chairman's memorandum.

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At Tab B is a transmittal memorandum for your signature to the President conveying General Wheeler's recommendation.

Attachments

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